

Testimony of Tom Fiorentino
President, Arc of Connecticut Board of Directors
Before the Appropriations Committee on the Governor's
Proposed Budget for the Department of Developmental Services
February 23, 2017

Sen. Osten, Sen. Formica, Rep. Walker and members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on the Governor's proposed DDS budget.

I am the president of the Arc of Connecticut Board of Directors, the state's oldest advocacy group for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

I am also the parent of a 26 year old son with an intellectual disability who lives with my wife and me in West Hartford. Under the State's de facto policy, he will continue to live with us until my wife and I are either both dead or permanently incapacitated.

That is a product of a system that continues to protect the inefficient status quo and discourages far more effective, integrated ways to deliver services. The efficient delivery of services is always a good idea; during a budget crisis it becomes an imperative. But that imperative does not seem to apply in Connecticut.

There are signs that Connecticut wants to change and we are encouraged and support the Governor's very welcome investment in reforming residential services and supports. It is the beginning, we hope, of a transformation of the system into one that can provide an effective continuum of services to many more people than currently receive those services.

Other states are light years ahead of Connecticut in providing residential services that are both more integrated into the community and that are far less expensive. It is time to follow their lead and reclaim Connecticut's now long lost reputation as a progressive state when it comes to helping people with I/DD live in the community.

At the same time, we oppose, as both unnecessary and draconian, the proposed cuts to day and employment services- where almost 700 people who have spent their entire lives getting ready to take their place in the community will be forced

to stay at home as there is no money for them when they graduate. We also oppose the cuts to Family Support grants and the Behavioral Services Program.

There are many other things that I could say, but I don't have the time so let me focus on this: you have a choice to make. The DDS system, despite the fact that there are outstanding individuals who work there and desperately want to do the right thing, is not an inefficient system.

There is waste in that system that could and should be cut before any programs that are desperately needed by families and individuals are cut. But historically that has not been what you do.

Instead, you permit, year after year, a place like STS to spend wildly disproportionate amounts of increasingly scarce funds. You have an institution serving very few people that last year cost almost \$100,000,000. That's over \$361,000 per person. And the per person costs will continue to rise.

Since 2014, the number of STS residents has dropped by 23% but the compensation of its workers has decreased by only 8%; since 2010 the number of residents has dropped by 40% but the staffing has only decreased by 11%. If you just eliminated unnecessary direct care overtime, you would save \$6,400,000.

And it is not just STS. DDS as a system had over \$45,000,000 in overtime last year. You had a DSW 2 in the North Region whose overtime alone was over \$150,000 and total compensation was over \$260,000. 20 DDS employees made more than \$100,000 in overtime, 204 made more than \$50,000 and 641 earned more than \$25,000 in overtime.

This kind of spending would never be tolerated in the equally competent, and far more efficient, private providers. There is no public policy reason it should be permitted within DDS. But it is. Unless you choose to stop it. Unless you choose to say that, in the face of the demonstrated needs of our fellow citizens, it is time to cut the waste and reallocate those funds.

Because in this time of scarce funds for human services, a decision to permit this waste to inefficiently serve some, is a decision to deny services to many others. Our entire community now understands that. We hope and trust that you do.